

Documents on Diplomacy: The Source

On a Certain Impatience with Latin America An Article by "Y" (Louis Halle) in Foreign Affairs, July 1950

"Democracy even under a tyranny continued to advance."
Edith Hamilton, "The Greek Way"

PUBLIC opinion in the United States has shown a sporadic impatience at the failure of many Latin American republics to achieve a greater degree of political democracy. The persistence of dictatorships in our midst throughout a war fought for democracy was a moral embarrassment. The establishment of new dictatorships after victory has seemed to some like a rejection of what we fought to achieve. While we were still fighting we put the best face on the business, just as we did with respect to our Soviet ally. The war over, opinion in this country has some times tended to react in the manner of a stern father in the privacy of his home after his children have publicly embarrassed him.

But is the relationship of the United States to the Latin American nations in fact paternal? Or is it fraternal? The distinction is fundamental to the question of what the United States ought to do about the state of democracy in Latin America.

The traditional political orientation of the 21 American republics is democratic. For Americans south as well as north, the ideal state is a free association of individuals who exercise their freedom under laws of their own making, enforced by officers of their own choice. This ideal gives a common direction to the political development for which all Americans strive; north and south, all are agreed on where they want to go.

The position of the United States within this community is distinct in several important respects, however. We had already achieved, by the time of our independence in 1776, a political sophistication that the others are, for the most part, still on their way to achieving. The fact is that we gained our national independence from the mother country because we had come of age and were ready for it. The other Americans gained theirs because the mother country was struck down. When, in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, the Spanish Empire fell apart under the impact of Napoleon, most of its American members were able to shake themselves free, along with Brazil and Haiti. But they were quite unready to assume the responsibility of self-government. The result was a sordid chaos out of which Latin America has still not finally emerged.

The political independence of the Latin American republics survived under the protection of British sea power, which supported our Monroe Doctrine, although that independence was at one time threatened by the British themselves in the River Plate and, at another, temporarily subverted by the Hapsburg dynasty in Mexico. But colonialism continued of necessity in the economic affairs of Latin America. Foreign interests teamed up with the governing elite to maintain the old design for exploitation of raw materials from the primitive American countries in the markets of the developed countries overseas. Foreigners built and managed the public services and transportation systems of the Latin American republics, controlled their agricultural and industrial enterprises, and in return reaped profits that were largely spent abroad. Economically, there was less difference between India and South America than there was politically, and it is not certain that the political advantage was entirely on the side of the South Americans.

Like colonial dependencies the world around in the nineteenth century, however, the Latin American countries were getting ready for democratic self-government. The situation today can not be accurately appraised unless it is seen in perspective. Over the past century and a half, to take a generous span, there has been a steady, marked improvement in the economic and social welfare of the Latin American peoples, and a growth in responsible political behavior. Chaos and tyranny have been on the wane. Nowhere today will you find government exercised as blindly and as brutally as it was by the Emperor Christophe in Haiti. No where will you find chaos such as confronted John L. Stephens when he arrived in Guatemala City on a diplomatic mission from President Van Buren and had to search for a government to which he could present his credentials. The political picture today, moreover, compares favorably with the picture only 20 years ago, when Machado ruled in Cuba, Gómez in Venezuela, Ibáñez in Chile, and Leguía in Peru. It does not compare unfavorably with the picture a dozen years ago, when Vargas was dictator in Brazil, Ubico in Guatemala, Martínez in El Salvador, Cárdenas in Honduras, Benavides in Peru, Busch in Bolivia, and Terra in Uruguay.

Moreover, the masses are today acquiring a political consciousness of which they showed few signs or none a generation ago. Labor is organizing, and labor organizations are moving in

the direction of responsible maturity. The proof of this popular emancipation is in the increasing degree to which political leaders present themselves as men of the people and make their appeal, whether demagogic or not, to popular sentiment. Even Generalissimo Trujillo, "benefactor" of the Dominican people and master of their destinies, advertises himself in every village of his land as the friend of the laboring man. There can be little doubt that there has been and continues to be a steady growth over the decades in individual freedom and respect for human rights. Not only are dictatorships fewer than they used to be, the outcry against those that do exist is greater. Honest elections are more common than they were. In the alternation that so many countries experience between elective and arbitrary governments, the periods of the former appear to be growing longer, those of the latter shorter.

The historical path of progress is upward by ups and downs, perhaps in obedience to something like the Hegelian principle of action, reaction and synthesis. Latin America's progress toward greater democracy has suffered repeated setbacks that have not, however, affected the underlying trend. One such setback occurred at the end of the 1920th and in the early 'thirties, but was followed by the steady, continuing gravitation toward the ideal of democracy. A lesser setback appeared to be occurring in the late 'forties, but its manifestations were relatively isolated. The reactionary coups that took place in 1948 and 1949 in Peru, Venezuela, and Panama, and the degeneration of the political situation in Colombia, gave rise to a wave of editorial alarm and pessimism in the United States (and throughout the hemisphere), where to some it seemed that all the gains of democracy were being wiped out by a landslide of reaction. But at the same time that democracy was suffering a setback in these four of the 21 republics, Costa Rica was returning to constitutional democratic government after a chaotic civil conflict, Honduras was enjoying the relatively liberal administration of an elected president after years of dictatorship, and Bolivia had a degree of democracy, shaky as it was, that observers a few years before thought could not possibly be realized in a country afflicted with such dire economic and social problems. Toward the end of 1949, Venezuela was restoring some constitutional guarantees and Peru was preparing for an election.

The relapses in individual countries during the late 'forties, it should be noted, were not unrelated to world economic conditions, any more than those of 20 years earlier had been unrelated to the economic collapse of those times. Nevertheless, they gave occasion to the critics who think all is lost whenever they see evidence that all is not won.

II

Implicit in what has been said above is the view that democracy is achieved by evolution rather than revolution. Those whose prime animus is against dictatorships have propagated a common delusion that democracy is the absence of dictators. They have thoughtlessly given dictatorship the positive and democracy the negative position; and on that basis they have assumed that democracy could be attained by the revolutionary overthrow of dictators. That, in a schoolboy's misconception of our history, is the meaning of 1776. The crusading spirit finds it easier to be against the infidel than for the faith.

Democracy is not an absolute condition, to be assumed by a people as one puts on an overcoat. It is political maturity. Like all maturity, it is various in its degrees and manifestations, and it is produced by the slow process of maturation. You cannot impose it by force, you cannot acquire it by decree or legislative enactment, you cannot produce it out of a hat by exhortation. It must be cultivated lovingly, tirelessly over the generations. It must be cultivated with perseverance and the stamina that comes from an assured faith in the possibilities of human nature. It must be built up, as Woodrow Wilson said, "by slow habit."

Democratic government is the outward and visible sign of this inward and spiritual grace. The overthrow of dictators, as we have so often seen, may result only in the chaos that leads to renewed dictatorship. By getting rid of its dictator a nation gains nothing but the opportunity which it may not be prepared to exploit. Self-government has an inward as well as an outward sense, and the inward comes first. The enjoyment of freedom, among peoples as among individuals, demands an acquired capacity for responsible behavior. This capacity is the mark of maturity, which in mortal men is the final product of slow growth from helpless and irresponsible infancy.

Maturity is not guaranteed by lapse of time. In this imperfect world not all individuals and not all peoples, however long they live, achieve it. The opportunity is denied the majority. It is denied them by poverty and the sordid necessities of their circumstances; it is denied them by the lack of means for education; it is denied them by the want of inspiring leadership; it is denied them by the absence of a tradition based on such leadership and nourished by it. Consequently, the realistic approach to the pro motion of democracy, regarded as something positive, must endeavor to provide the opportunity and the inspiration for growth. That done, it is still necessary to maintain patience with the slowness of the process.

The obstacles to the growth of democracy in Latin America, specifically, have been and continue to be: 1, poverty, which limits the enjoyment of political freedom by imposing its own kind of

bondage; 2, illiteracy, which goes with poverty and perpetuates it; 3, social insecurity, which makes for desperation and focusses men's attention on more practical immediate objectives than those of political democracy; and 4, a tradition of political behavior marked by intemperance, intransigence, flamboyance and the worship of strong men.

A detailed discussion of the economic and social problems of the other American republics is outside the scope of this article. The political behavior, however, calls for special comment. Go into some Latin American countries where free speech is allowed, and, if an election campaign is in progress, note the campaign language painted on the walls of the towns: *Viva Rodriguez! Que muere Gonzalez!* (Long live Rodriguez! Death to Gonzalez!). The Gonzalistas, in turn, announce that when they get into power they will hang the Rodriguistas. Imagine an election campaign conducted in the United States or England in such terms! Imagine placards crying "Death to Dewey!" and "We are going to hang Truman!" These terms of life-and-death provoke desperate measures and counter-measures in election campaigns, to the subversion of democratic scruples. The important point here, however, is that this is not the behavior of mature men and women. It resembles, rather, the conduct of schoolboy gangs. Carried far enough, in the name of freedom, it leads to chaos and the suppression of freedom.

Worship of the "man on horseback" (through self-identification) is another manifestation of immaturity. It is characteristic of adolescence, this admiration for the ruthless hero who tramples down all opposition, makes himself superior to law, and is irresistible to passionate women who serve his pleasure in droves.

The 21 American republics vary widely in the degree of their development as in most other characteristics. Each has its own politics, its own aspects of democracy, its own failings. It is a popular misconception that you can divide them, as they stand today, between those that are immaculate democracies and those that are black dictatorships. All of them are shades of gray. Two of them, the United States and Uruguay, are among the few outstanding democracies of the world; but a part of the colored population of the former is effectively disfranchised. The nearest approaches to a truly stifling dictatorship are to be found in the Dominican Republic and Nicaragua, where the Governments have a personal rather than an ideological base and the ideals of democracy are accorded lip-service. (It is never wise to underestimate the significance of lip-service.) All the American peoples enjoy areas of freedom more or less wide in their political lives; all of them are subject to restrictions more or less great. Some have ostensible freedom severely qualified in practice by the prevalence of governmental corruption: individuals must pay for the privileges

of citizenship or can buy exemptions from rule. Other peoples are in effect denied the power to choose their governments but are ruled with a light hand (like those of our District of Columbia). Under such circumstances, no clear line can be drawn, for purposes of policy, between the sheep and the goats.

The special position of the United States, however, still holds. It is the oldest and most mature as well as the most powerful of the 21 republics. Few would deny that this imposes a special responsibility upon it. The differences of opinion concern the nature of the responsibility and how it should be discharged.

III

The question whether the backward countries of Latin America were to be regarded as responsible adults or as irresponsible children was first answered by us in the early years of the twentieth century. With the construction of the Panama Canal we felt that we could no longer tolerate disorder and the lack of responsible government when such conditions invited and seemed to justify European intervention in an area that had become vital to our security. We therefore took it upon ourselves to exercise a paternalistic police power in the Caribbean. Theodore Roosevelt's "corollary" to the Monroe Doctrine told the Europeans, in effect, that we would be responsible for keeping order among the children in our own yard. The assumption, which was not without validity at the time, was that these republics had not reached the stage of development at which they could be responsible for their actions. Consequently, when chaos threatened our interests and those of other mature nations, we did not scruple to land armed forces and establish military governments of our own in the Dominican Republic, Haiti and Nicaragua.

There are several reasons why public opinion in the United States today tends to be more impatient than it used to be with Latin American failures in democracy. One primary reason is that today we have formally accepted the other American republics as adults and our equals in dignity. We measure them, accordingly, by a new and more rigorous standard of political behavior.

The turning point in our attitude came between 1928 and 1936, with our abandonment of intervention and our adoption of the Good Neighbor Policy. It may in fact be said that at the Montevideo and Buenos Aires Conferences of 1933 and 1936 we joined with the Latin Americans in formally declaring them to be of age. The evolution that reached this conclusion was more in themselves than in us. They had arrived at the stage, with respect to us, that we had arrived at with respect to England in the 1770s. Unlike the England of George III, however, we had sense enough to join them in their declaration of independence, which we had resisted at Havana in 1928. More than that, having taken the new direction from them, we proceeded to put ourselves in the lead. It was an act

of statesmanship such as has rarely been displayed by any world Power. The era of good feeling that followed was its reward.

We should remind ourselves constantly of this, because our initiative in proclaiming the Good Neighbor Policy was an expression of our best and truest instinct, upon which our country was founded and by which it has grown great. In the Philippines yesterday and in Puerto Rico today we see the salutary working of that same instinct. It teaches a lesson that the British learned partly from us in our revolt, and that has enabled them to transmute their old Empire into the present Commonwealth of Nations. The two traditional associations of states that exist today, different as they are in certain fundamentals, exist simply by virtue of such self-denial. If Athens had exercised it in the fifth century B.C. she need not have fallen at the height of her glory before the Peloponnesian coalition.

The acceptance of equal status is the essence of our Good Neighbor Policy, which is not, as some think, a policy of philanthropic largesse. It is, in the words of Franklin D. Roosevelt's original proclamation, the policy of "the neighbor who resolutely respects himself and, because he does so, respects the rights of others." These words in themselves have no sanctity. They do not even have a precise meaning. They were not limited in their application to the inter-American community, although that was where, in 1933, they were bound to have their chief significance. They are quoted here simply because they presuppose a world of adults in which all have equal rights. They might have been rhetoric; but the good faith with which they were spoken was demonstrated when, in the subsequent inter-American conferences, we joined the other American republics in accepting the juridical equality of all, and, consequently, abjuring intervention in the affairs of any.

In international affairs, as elsewhere, matters which are in fact the product of a slow and continuing evolution are often formalized at a particular instant. The difference between 20 and 21 years of age is not as great as our laws make it seem. The United States formally proclaimed its independence in 1776, but whether we could make it good by establishing ourselves firmly as a nation remained a question for almost three generations. Is it any wonder that the ability of all the Latin American republics to make good their claim to adult equality should still be questioned today, so short a time after they have, so to speak, turned 21?

The maturity of nations is generally less than the maturity of men, in the sense that the most mature nation will be childish in its behavior by comparison with the most mature man. As the very existence of national governments indicates the incapacity of men for perfect self-government, so the immaturity and irresponsibility of nations warns of the dangers of international

anarchy. In the absence of any other international regulation, this universal immaturity virtually requires the development of a system in which the strong nation lords it over the weak. At a time when we considered that at least some of the other American republics were excessively immature and irresponsible, we did not scruple ourselves to exercise certain powers of government over them. With the advent of the Good Neighbor Policy we abandoned the use of such powers on the theory that all the members of our community were of age and had achieved a capacity for responsible conduct that allowed us to risk the anarchy which, in default of any superior authority, must reign among sovereign equals. That was the situation in the latter 1930s, when the rising menace of Fascist imperialism overseas promoted an exceptional measure of self-discipline in the relations among the American republics, and thus contributed to the justification of our risk.

The implications of such a situation as confronted us in 1933 may be brought out by a comparison. Relations among the American republics at the beginning of the century were like the political relations among the pioneers on our Western frontier a century ago. On the frontier there was, as yet, no organized community, with police and judiciary, to protect the rights of the individual. Consequently, everyone carried arms and undertook, himself, to make good his own rights. If he was injured he did not call in the police but set out on his own to obtain retribution. In actual practice, however, the definition and the procurement of justice became privileges of the strong, who indulged in "intervention" against those whose weakness compelled them to submit. The development of effective community organization doomed such interventionism. The community as a whole, through administrative instruments created for the purpose, gave protection to the rights of each member alike, and it could not tolerate the usurpation of its functions by individuals. The practice of government by the strong succumbed, accordingly, to the principle of equality under law.

The United States in the 1930s seems to have been unusually forehanded in renouncing intervention and accepting the principle of equality under the law before there was any provision for law-enforcement by the community. This was certainly an act of faith on its part. It is no coincidence, however, that at Buenos Aires in 1936 the same inter-American conference that adopted the treaty commitment on nonintervention also adopted the principle of formal consultation among the American republics for the purpose of dealing by concerted action with situations of common concern. This was followed, in successive inter-American conferences, by the creation of the necessary instruments. The establishment of the Consultative Meetings of Foreign Ministers at Lima in 1938 was the first step in that direction. Today we have, in the Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance which was signed at Rio de Janeiro in 1947, a provision for action by the community as a whole to meet any

armed attack against any of its members, whether from outside or inside the community. Thus our inter-American community has now assumed active responsibility for protecting the rights of its member states, and if such situations as jeopardized the order of the Caribbean at the turn of the century should recur, the United States would now have no right to deal with them on its own. It would have to look to the community for regulatory action.

The official inter-American system, now formalized in the Organization of American States and other agencies, has undertaken, like the United Nations, to define the rights of individuals as well as the rights of states. However, while it has made some provision for community enforcement of the latter rights, it has thus far confined itself to proclaiming human rights. Thus a government that is restricted by the community in its foreign undertakings is secure from community sanctions in the treatment it accords its own people, for this is a domestic matter in which an unqualified sovereignty is still the rule. The community has formulated applicable standards but has not provided for enforcing them. We in the United States may appreciate the difficulty of making any such provision when we consider the reluctance with which we ourselves would, for example, view the interposition of the American republics for the enfranchisement of the citizens of the District of Columbia.

This jealous protection of sovereign freedom in the domestic field is illustrated by the disposition that the American republics have shown in recent years to join together in withholding official recognition from a revolutionary government as long as there is a reasonable and unresolved suspicion that it has had the assistance of another state in its advent to power. This represents, not a qualification of sovereignty in the country concerned, but its protection. No American state can today be brought before any official tribunal on grounds of not practising democracy at home.

IV

The development of a wise foreign policy can take place only in terms of the historical perspective. The historical view shows us a group of 21 separate nations striving for democratic self realization, and also working for the development of a community to regulate their affairs. One may reasonably speculate on the possibility of a day when the international community is capable of guaranteeing the democratic rights of the individual within each nation. More than that, a constructive foreign policy might well promote the evolution of basic conditions which would increase this possibility. Under any circumstances, it will continue to be a question how far international community can make itself effective in any particular case or at any particular time. Our own attitude toward our own sovereignty must necessarily enter into a determination of our position on such a question.

The fact is that today the Organization of American States, like the United Nations, is unable to do more than formulate standards and develop general resolutions for the guidance of such governments as are willing to heed them. It can promote democracy through the expression of moral purpose by focussing international opinion in general terms. This is important and provides an opportunity for United States leadership, but most of us would feel it frustrating if our policy had to rely on this exclusively for the promotion of democracy in the hemisphere.

A more direct and immediate opportunity arises from the fact that the American republics, as nations or peoples if not as governments, are striving to rise above their submerged pasts into the daylight of democracy. If the ideal and the will to realize it were lacking, it is hard to see what the United States could do. It would find itself in the position of a gardener who waters a dead shoot. Our actual position, however, is that of seeking to help a vital and growing process.

We recognize that extreme economic and social misery, and inadequate education, are obstacles to the growth of democracy. All the American republics are committed by their policies to reduce these obstacles. They are committed as well, by their policies and by acts of inter-American conferences, to cooperate for this purpose. The capacity of the United States to contribute to the achievement of this community goal is so much greater than that of any other country that the concept of cooperation often becomes a matter more of spirit than of substance: it is as if John D. Rockefeller and the average reader of this article had pooled their wealth. The concept is, however, essential in a community of juridically equal and self-respecting states. It is invaluable not only for moral but for practical reasons; in no other context could the assistance of the United States be effective.

Active cooperation for economic development is, then, one of the prime policies by which the United States exercises leadership and makes its practical contribution to the growth of democracy. In response to requests from the other American republics, based on their own plans and their own efforts, our Government finances development projects and furnishes technical knowledge and skills for their realization. This is the policy behind our Export Import Bank and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, in which we are the principal stockholder. It is the policy behind our Institute of Inter-American Affairs, a government agency under the Secretary of State which, since 1942, has been cooperating with government agencies in the other American republics to develop their agriculture, their public health and their basic education. It is, finally, the policy expressed by President Truman in Point Four of his Inaugural Address last year, the policy of promoting economic development by disseminating techniques and stimulating the productive investment of capital.

In a large sense, however, our increasingly varied and comprehensive activities in the field of economic development represent the most direct practical expression of the moral leadership that our position and our policy require of us. This is brought out by looking at the context of our technical and financial cooperation.

Those who come bearing such gifts must, first of all, be trusted. When our Government sends an agricultural technician to a foreign country the effectiveness of his mission depends on his being accepted at face value. If it were thought that he was a secret agent of the United States, if it were thought that his real purpose was to spy or to develop markets for the United States by inhibiting competing production, his advice would be distrusted and his assistance rejected. If he used his position to meddle in local politics he would lose his usefulness. The policy of technical assistance, therefore, can be successful only where the moral credit of the United States prevails. That is why our State Department has opposed all proposals that we make our assistance contingent on the granting of special concessions, or acquiescence in demands that we may be pressing in other connections. The accepted purity of our motives is more important, in the long run, than any particular advantages that might be gained by compromising them.

The agricultural technician, if his mission is a success, justifies himself by more than his technical contribution. He is in himself a living sales demonstration of our democracy: its honesty, its high purpose, its competence and its energy. In backward countries where people have grown cynical under the oppression of venal and futile officials, his example and his accomplishment recreate hope and reinforce the democratic ideal. The moral influence that we can achieve in this way is a priceless asset in the conduct of our diplomacy and the promotion of our democracy. It is based on a very simple cornerstone of our foreign policy. We must be trusted. To be trusted we must be trustworthy.

When it comes to moral leadership, our example is necessarily more important than our precept. The fact that in this country we hold orderly elections, accept their results, and change our administrations without force has an incalculable influence throughout Latin America. Our forbearance in not using our power to gain imperialistic ends gives us a moral authority that represents a welcome alternative to the rule of force. Courage and coolness in the face of difficulties, self-discipline, our efficiency, our ability to solve problems and get things done are persuasive arguments in favor of our way of life. They keep the ideal alive among peoples who might otherwise give themselves up in despair to totalitarian rule.

The danger of precept is self-righteousness, which assumes that the ideal is already sufficiently exemplified in the preceptor. It

will do us no harm to recognize that this is a national weakness in ourselves which makes us intolerant of the shortcomings of other nations, even when we share them. This is the typical expression of the xenophobia that is widespread in this country, as it is in others. It is found in the belief that other countries think only of their own selfish interests, while we simply look out for our rights. It is found in the indignation at political corruption abroad that assumes the absence of anything comparable at home. It is found in our impatience with discriminatory trade and employment practices in other countries and indifference to discriminatory legislation at home.

This moral danger is directly relevant to the problem of our Latin American policy; it is the basis of the paternalistic school. Almost invariably, national self-righteousness is dominant in the breasts of the interventionists or quasi-interventionists who advocate forcing the Latin Americans to live up to our concept of political democracy. It is outspoken among those who would have us turn our backs on the other American republics because they are unworthy of us.

Given the good example, given the perception that the example will not support self-righteousness, given the tolerance that must follow from such a perception, moral leadership still requires the inspiration of the word. Abraham Lincoln and Franklin D. Roosevelt gave this inspiration. Their leadership was exercised, not in the attempt to reform others and not in moral denunciation of others, but in the eloquent definition of a common ideal for the strengthening of a common purpose. Such leadership expresses itself as what "we" (nations or peoples) must do, not as what "you" must do. That is one reason why Lincoln was a greater moral leader than Carrie Nation.

It is easy to say that our policy is that of giving moral leadership. The translation of that policy into action depends on intangibles. It depends on the maintenance of our own inspiration and the clarity of our purpose. We must cultivate these things in ourselves, and to the extent that we have them we must speak of them. It is on this sort of thing, as well as on technical assistance, that our contribution to the continued growth of Latin American democracy depends. Democracy will tend to be strong there as it is robust, positive and vivid here.

V.

The other American republics are younger and less mature than the United States. Their historic drive is in the direction of the orderly practice of political democracy. They have made progress since the days when Bolivar, on his deathbed, is reported to have said that America was ungovernable. They govern themselves today more or less badly, more or less well. The ferment of new

ideas, ideas of economic and social democracy, ideas emanating from the United States among other sources, contributes to their instability, as it also does to their progress. The achievement of greater maturity depends on their experience in exercising, for themselves, the responsibility of adult nations. There is no evidence that our assumption of such responsibility on behalf of Haiti, the Dominican Republic and Nicaragua brought them nearer maturity.

The United States should, therefore, encourage the Latin American states to participate responsibly in the councils of the world. We should, as occasion allows, take them into our confidence and seek their advice as equals. We should cultivate close working relations with their statesmen in dealing with world affairs. Nothing is so conducive to the achievement of adult stature as to be treated like an adult, nothing so stultifying to development as to be treated like a child. Nations are the same as individuals in this. The man who writes a letter to the newspaper advocating a national policy of one kind or another would expend more forethought on his proposal if he knew it might be adopted simply because he made it. The fact that what he says is not likely to exert a determining influence leaves him free to indulge in irresponsibility. History shows that when we have asked the advice of Latin Americans and shown a disposition to be guided by it, they have behaved in more statesmanlike fashion than when we have undertaken to tell them what they must do for their own good. We can best promote responsible attitudes and actions among

the other American republics by encouraging them to partake of responsibility.

We must continue to cooperate with the other American republics as friends for the common objectives of improving human life and securing human freedom in the hemisphere, and not for motives that would discredit our cooperation. The very fact that these nations are, in so many respects, younger than we, and much weaker, should persuade us to maintain an attitude of *noblesse oblige*. We North Americans, by our nature, feel better when we are conducting ourselves in a broad and generous way than when our behavior in the world is mean, quarrelsome and niggardly. That is our natural instinct. But we have a mortal fear of being "suckers" that impels us constantly to throttle our instinct. In the case of the other American republics we can afford by virtue of our preponderant strength to fulfill our capacity for greatness.

Latin America, free of iron curtains, dedicated to the attainment of democracy, striving for human betterment, offers us a clean field for a positive policy based on goodwill and an inspired purpose. Such a policy must be for democracy rather than merely against dictators; it must be cooperative rather than self righteous and denunciatory; it must be candid rather than conspiratorial; and it must seek its own realization by developing the moral credit that supports it. In no other way shall we contribute to realizing the kind of democratic hemisphere that all of us, paternalists and fraternalists alike, seek to achieve. ■

Source

Foreign Affairs, Vol 28, No. 4 (July 1950), pp. 565-579.

<http://americanempireproject.com/empiresworkshop/chapter1/TheTwentiethCentury-CompletingTheRevolution/LouisHalles1950YArticleOnLatinAmerica.pdf>